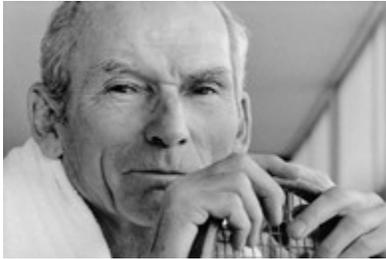


Tennis Legend Dies at 89



Tom Brown



Remembering a Bay Area Tennis Legend, Tom Brown

Thomas Pollok Brown, noted amateur tennis player for over six decades and member of the USTA NorCal Tennis Hall of Fame, died Oct. 27 in Castro Valley, Ca., of complications from Alzheimer's Disease. He was 89.

Born in Washington, D.C., he moved to San Francisco at the age of 2 with his parents, Hilda Fisher Brown, and Tom Brown, Sr., both native-born Californians. His father was a newspaperman, his mother a teacher.

Tom, Jr. was a lively child with a fierce determination to excel at whatever he tried. His tennis appetite was whetted at age 9 by his mother beating him 6-2 at San Francisco's Golden Gate Park courts. Undaunted, Tom traded ball boy services for tennis lessons from Howard Kinsey, a former national champion and the teaching pro at the California Tennis Club. Two years later, Tom won his first trophy, the San Francisco Playground Championships.

At 15, he was ball boy at a Davis Cup challenge match played at San Francisco's Olympic Club between the United States and Japan. The American team was headed by Don Budge, who later became a close personal friend and frequent spar mate.

At 21, representing the University of California, Tom was a finalist in both singles and doubles of the National Intercollegiates.

Enlisting in the army during World War II, he served as a mortar gunner with the 20th Armored Division in Europe. Following his discharge in 1945, he threw himself into tennis before taking on law school and a planned legal career.

In 1946, age 23, at the first Wimbledon held after the war, Tom, a virtual unknown, won the Men's Doubles (with Jack Kramer) and the Mixed Doubles (with Louise Brough). That same year, he was a finalist at the National Singles (today part of the U.S. Open) and named to the first post-war Davis Cup Challenge, played in Australia. (The U.S. won, a big surprise in those days - 5-0).

In 1947, Tom again was Singles finalist at both Wimbledon and the Nationals, against Jack Kramer both times. Newsreel footage of Tom in action was used to double for actor Farley Granger in the classic Hitchcock thriller, "Strangers On a Train". Tom was chosen instead of Jack because of his dark hair. Kramer was blond.

Tom played on two more Davis Cup teams, and won another national mixed doubles title before settling down to marriage, raising a family, and being a San Francisco lawyer for 36 years. He would emerge every now and then for a major tennis tournament. Ten times he won the San Francisco City Championships. At ages 47 and 48, he won the National Men's 45-age Hard Courts.

Dick Gould, famed for his long and distinguished coaching career at Stanford, recalled, "I clearly remember getting clocked by him when I was in college and playing his Olympic Club team. I thought I was a college hotshot, but I won only one game. I think Tom had the most penetrating ground strokes I had — or have — ever seen."

He celebrated retirement from business in 1987 by achieving the Singles Grand Slam in the 65 age group - Hard Court, Grass, Clay, Indoors. That same year, with Bobby Riggs as partner, he won the 65 Doubles titles for all but the Clay.

From 1987-1993, Tom was the nationally ranked #1 singles player in the 65-age group . In 1988-89, he was #1 in the world. Eighteen more national titles, both singles and doubles, were won through the age of 76. During his senior career, he played overseas on most of the international cup teams. His last big wins were in 1998 at the National Men's 75 Singles Hard Court and Indoor.

He was a member of The Olympic Club and California Tennis Club, both of San Francisco, and the Peninsula Tennis Club, Burlingame. He was a graduate of San Francisco's Lowell High School, UC-Berkeley, and Boalt Hall School of Law.

Tom was a great story-teller, and in 2006 published his memoirs, "As Tom Goes By: A Tennis Memoir".